

# Blaxhall Village Newsletter



Winter 2024

## Good News! (and a bit of bad)



OK, let's get the bad news out of the way first - the village is still quite damp; record February rainfall has seen our issues with flooded roads continue. However, progress is slowly being made, with ESC, SCC and the landowners, to form a workable, long-term solutions to mitigate those issues, so try to hang in there! On a clearly brighter note (no pun intended), we have several positive developments to report as we head towards spring. Firstly, the twin-bishops over at Bury have finally switched Gogglebox off for long enough to appoint us a new rector (after a brief, 2½ year wait). Secondly, we're getting a blue plaque! Dedicated to George Ewart Evans, it is due to be unveiled next month. Thirdly, we've been approved for a £¼ million grant to prevent the church tower toppling over and crashing through the roof of the nave, so it's a happy new year indeed! All



the details inside, together with our other news, and details of upcoming events, so please read on.

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## **Busy Blaxhall Church: National Heritage Lottery Triumph; Meet the New Rector; Come to the Agm; Plan the Festival; Celebrate Easter!**

Blaxhall residents will be delighted to hear that our application to the NHLF has been successful, and we have been offered in excess of £243,000 for the repairs to our church tower.

The only fly in the ointment/blot on the landscape/cloud on the horizon is the £15,000 we need to raise to qualify for that funding; but hey.....that only means:

15 people donating £1000

OR

100 people donating £150

OR

150 people donating £100

How hard can it be??? To donate please go to:

<https://blaxhallcommunitytower.com/shop/ols/products/make-a-donation-to-repair-the-community-tower>

Our new rector, ROB LEVERITT, will be installed in the benefice at Benhall Church on 25th March at 7.30. As Rob is a self-confessed lover of the Great Outdoors (what better rector for Blaxhall???) he readily agreed to come to our Village Hall to find out more about George Ewart Evans and join in with one of Sheila's famous Blaxhall Teas! This will be after the PCC AGM which will follow our communion service on 7th April. Read more about this special event on our History Page.

**HAVE YOUR SAY:** The PCC of St Peter's Church are holding their AGM at 11.30 on Sunday 7th April. We will be electing officers of the church and are keen to welcome any willing helpers onto the PCC.

**ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:** St Peter's Festival will be celebrated in Blaxhall on 29th-30th June! We will be holding a planning meeting to decide the theme on 14th March at 2pm at Abbey Farm Schoolroom, Snape, IP17 1RQ. Alternatively submit your ideas to: [miranda@thesummerhouseinsnape.co.uk](mailto:miranda@thesummerhouseinsnape.co.uk)

**EASTER** services are at Farnham Church this year (see E&F) so we are combining all the things we do best in Blaxhall: gardening, wild flower and easter egg hunting, tea drinking and chatting thereby celebrating Easter in our own idiosyncratic way! There are posters round the village, so do feel free to bring any children or grandchildren you may have hanging around, along with some flowering bulbs and in outdoor clothes. 3pm-5pm in the Churchyard!





## **Playing Field Update**

You will have noticed that the playing field is missing most of the play equipment. The last inspection reported that the swings and climbing frame were classed as high risks so we had no choice but to make the field safe.

We were hoping to have a whole new play area, but unfortunately grant funding for this type of project is no longer available to us. We have therefore decided to replace the swings using some grant funding previously received and money raised from events such as the Fete, Summer Ball and Christmas party.

The new swing set is on order and should be in place by early May.

We are still looking for funding to replace and enhance other items on the field.

## **Christmas Party 2023**

The Christmas Party was a great success, enjoyed by a capacity crowd. Apologies to those who were disappointed but we couldn't squeeze any more in. Everyone was determined to enjoy themselves and in the process raised over £900 which has gone towards our new swings!

## **Summer Ball 2024**

After the resounding success of last years Summer Ball there seems to be enthusiasm to do it again this year. The date will be 22nd June so it will be a solstice special.

The tickets will go on sale from 25th May until 15th June and strictly only between these dates. Sorry but we cannot accept any late requests. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Graham 688192

bowlesies@hotmail.com

## **Roads**

At the last Parish Council meeting we had a very positive meeting with both County and District councillors. In the past the two councils have tended to suggest that the problems we have are the responsibility of the other body, resulting in nobody doing anything. They have now agreed to communicate with each other as some works are ambiguous as far as responsibility goes. Already we have had road sweeping action at various locations which have resulted in improvements.

We have also had discussions with new shoots which have proved very positive. They have already started to attend to the sand drifts and are looking into how to improve their entrances onto the roads. We have agreed a further meeting to move forward on improving Blaxhall roads as much as possible, but we must all be mindful that climate change has brought more frequent and heavier rainfall.

We cannot cure all of our ills, but the Parish Council is determined to get a reduction in the problems that we can do something about, although we will never achieve the total result we would like.

## Blue Plaque Coming to Blaxhall

Most residents of Blaxhall will already be familiar with the name George Ewart Evans, as will many of those interested in social history around the world. His time living in the village during the 1940s & 50s undoubtedly played a huge part in both firing his interest in the subject and by providing a wealth of core material that lead to several books.

It is then, very fitting that his time here should be remembered by a blue plaque, and perhaps a little surprising that it's not happened earlier. The project has been driven by Robert Ashton, Evans enthusiast and author of the recent follow-up "Where Are the Fellows Who Cut the Hay?" The plaque is due to be unveiled at the Village Hall on the 7th of April, in an event that will also include screenings of *A Writer's Suffolk* (1980) and *Here's a Health to the Barley Mow* (1955). The event will also be an opportunity to meet new rector, Robert Leveritt, who arrives in March and will be present as a guest.

For those who haven't heard of George Ewart Evans, or know the name, but very little of his story, please read on.

Born the in the mining town of Abercynon, south Wales, where his parents ran a grocery business, Evans went to grammar school and later studied at Cardiff University, graduating during the Great Depression. With little opportunity for employment he migrated to England and started working at Sawston Village College, an experimental community school in Cambridgeshire. Here he met his wife, Florence Ellen, also a teacher. In 1941 he

was called up and joined the RAF, but was onsigned to routine duties because of poor hearing. In 1947 e settled in Blaxhall, where his wife taught in the school. He soon became fascinated by the profound changes he saw happening around him, as many facets of life little changed

Blaxhall Parish Council

GEORGE EWART  
EVANS

(1909 - 1989)

Author of

*'Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay'*

Lived in Blaxhall

WHERE ARE THE  
FELLOWS  
WHO CUT  
THE HAY?



*How Traditions From the Past  
Can Shape Our Future*

ROBERT ASHTON

ASK  
THE FELLOWS  
WHO CUT  
THE HAY

George Ewart  
Evans



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in centuries were rapidly being lost, as a result of the coming of mechanisation, much improved transport and communication, greater expectations and opportunities, reduced impact of religion, and even birth control. Within just a few decades the population of Blaxhall fell from almost 600 to nearer 200, the school went from more than 80 pupils to less than 20, and the number of farm workers from three figures to single figures as dozens of heavy horses were replaced by a handful of tractors. Electricity arrived, as did radio, television, fashion, better health care, metalled roads, cars and mains water, while other things disappeared; the traditional, heavily-staffed country house, packed churches, fear and faith based on old superstitions, and the unquestioned role of male and female to name but a few.

Realising that not only was he living amongst a generation that would be the last who were fully familiar with many of the old ways, but also that so much of those people's history and tradition was oral, he was inspired to record as much as possible while the opportunity remained.

The result, was "*Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*", first published in 1956, and still in print today. Looking back today you wonder if even George himself

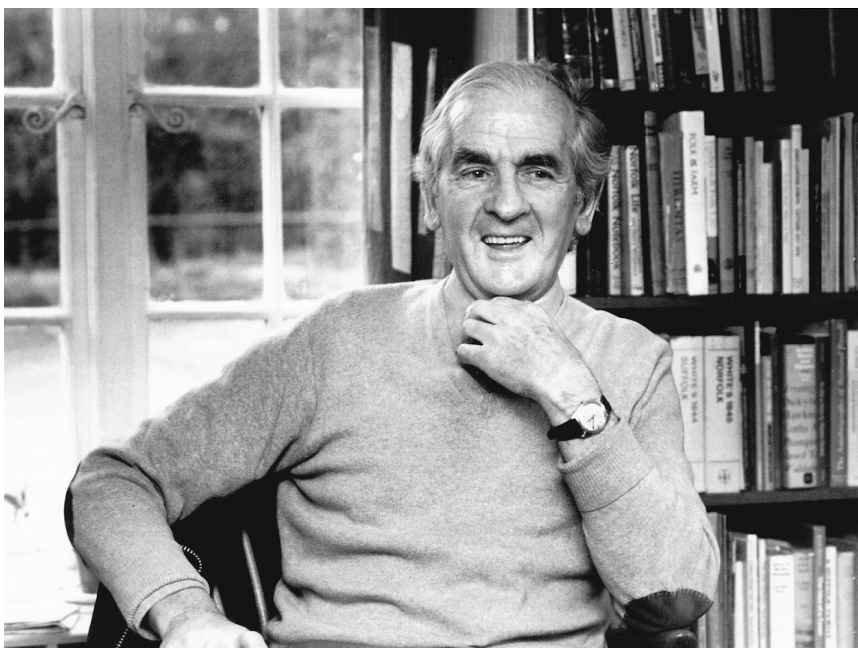


*George Ewart Evans with his children in the school garden*

fully appreciated the true magnitude of change ahead, not least in something as simple as the names that filled his book; in the 1940s there were still dozens each of Lings, Smys, Hammonds, Thurstons, Savages and Scarces, who'd been here in unbroken lines for centuries, now there are just a couple of examples of some, and none at all of others.

In one of his later titles, "*The Crooked Scythe*", Evans summed up the Blaxhall countryman:

His knowledge is not a personal knowledge but has been available to him through oral tradition



which is the unselfconscious medium of transmission. It is in his bones, you could say, and nonetheless valuable for that.... It was here at this time, and with the dressing and elaborating on it later, that I transposed the Blaxhall community in my own mind into its true place in an ancient historical sequence, keeping the continuity that was for ever changing, and for ever remaining the same, until an irreparable break substituted the machines for animal power, and put an end to a period that had lasted well over two thousand years.



## BCOST Update

### Stone Common Work Parties

BCOST (that's the Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust, for anyone who doesn't already know us) will be holding a work party at Stone Common on the afternoon of Sunday 30 March, from 1:30pm. We have a number of tasks ongoing on the public access land at Stone Common: dismantling and clearing redundant fencing (storing the materials for re-use where



possible), clearing invasive vegetation from along Prevost's Path, and the creation of small areas of gorse as wildlife habitat. This continues the work carried out in February and shown in the photos above and left. Please do come and join us: bring gardening gloves and any tools you may have to hand: particularly spades, wire-cutters, handsaws, secateurs.



### AGM and Barn Owl Talk

We will be holding our Annual General Meeting in Blaxhall village hall on Saturday 13 April, starting at 2:30pm. There will be a short talk by Sally Nelson, Sarah Glyde and Dave Pearsons of Barn Owl Support Suffolk (BOSS), a part of the Suffolk Bird Group. BOSS aims to raise awareness on issues of barn owl conservation and care, to encourage the installation of new nest boxes in barn owl territories and the maintenance in existing nest boxes, and to help recruit barn owl monitors where these are needed.

## Local Transport Plan and Survey

The availability of public transport is one of those subjects that's never too far from the conversation in Blaxhall, with the situation in pretty constant flux over the last couple of decades. That being the case, readers may be interested in visiting the link below, which leads to Suffolk County Council's latest update and survey on services across the county.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>



## Board Games Afternoons

The board game afternoons in the village hall, started last year, have rapidly risen to the status of a firm entry in several diaries, so if you haven't yet paid a visit, I wholeheartedly recommend giving it a look. The whole exercise is very light hearted, with the opportunity for a catch-up being every bit as important as the need to compete. Games are for any number of people from 2 up to 5, 6, or more.

You're welcome to bring your own favourite along, or try one of the many others available, from the very basic, to serious brain teasers!



The board games afternoons take place at 2.30pm on the last Sunday of every month.

## News of the Pub

The Ship is in the process of being registered as an Asset of Community Value. This in itself does not do much to safeguard the pub for the village but it does provide time for any community interest to have 6 months to put together a bid.

You will all be receiving a questionnaire in the next few days (if not already) so please return it, giving us your thoughts. Cheers.

Graham

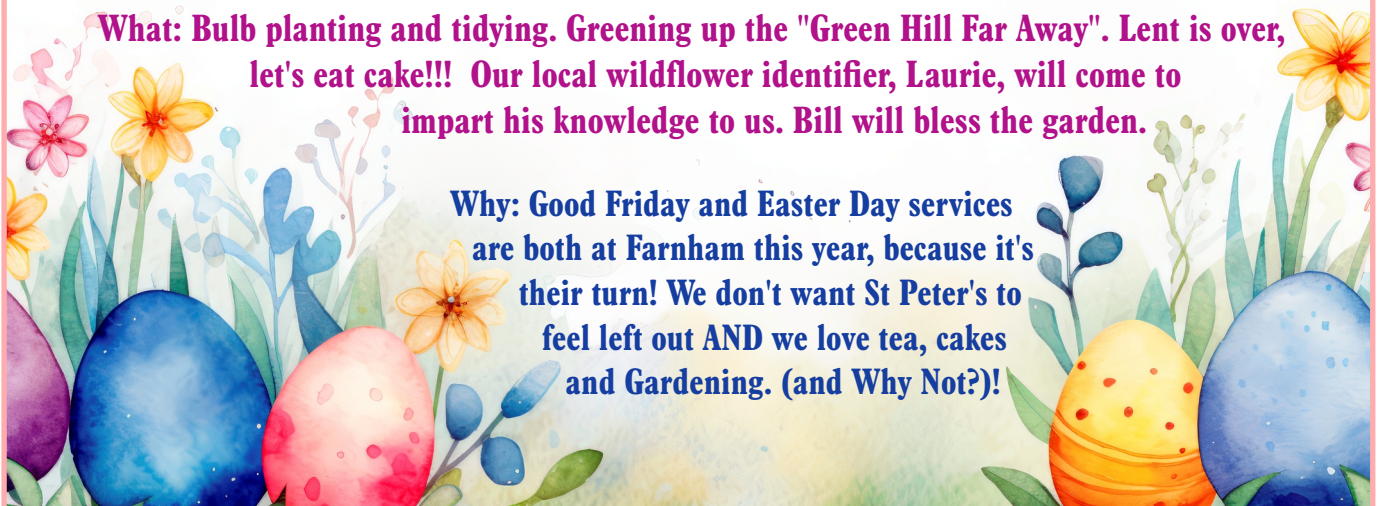
## CELEBRATE EASTER IN THE GARDEN & AN EASTER EGG HUNT IN THE CHURCHYARD

**When: Saturday 30th March at 3pm**

**Where: Outside the East Window of St Peter's Church, Blaxhall and in the surrounding churchyard.**

**What: Bulb planting and tidying. Greening up the "Green Hill Far Away". Lent is over, let's eat cake!!! Our local wildflower identifier, Laurie, will come to impart his knowledge to us. Bill will bless the garden.**

**Why: Good Friday and Easter Day services are both at Farnham this year, because it's their turn! We don't want St Peter's to feel left out AND we love tea, cakes and Gardening. (and Why Not?)!**





## Parish Councillors

|                  |                             |             |              |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Graham Bowles    | 01728 688192 (Chairman)     | Karen Baker | 01728 688200 |
| Shane Pictor     | 01728 885215                | Ray Herring | 01728 746337 |
| Jonathan Cutting | 01728 885115                | Mark Oakley | 01728 687507 |
| Graham Atkinson  | 01728 687589                | Maria Cooke |              |
| Joanne Peters    | 01394 459400 (Parish Clerk) |             |              |

Suffolk Coastal District Councillor - Tim Wilson 07823 587947 [tim.wilson@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:tim.wilson@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)

Suffolk County Councillor - Andrew Reid 07545 423799 [andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk)

Copies of minutes and agendas can be found at <http://blaxhall.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/>

**Parish Council** meetings are held in the Village Hall at 7.30 and are open to all parishioners, the public and press. The 2024 dates are: **Wednesday 10th January, Wednesday 6th March, Wednesday 1st May, Wednesday 3rd July, Wednesday 4th September and Wednesday 6th November.**

**Community Transport** – “Connecting Communities” **01728 635938** The service booking line operates 08.45am to 4pm, Mon-Fri. You can book a pick-up with “Katch” bus service by using the app, or by phoning **01728 554455**.

**Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust** – [www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org](http://www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org)  
For contact details of all trustees ring Mark Oakley 01728 687507

The **Mobile Library** comes to Blaxhall, and stops at **The Youth Hostel 9.35 – 10am** calling every 4 weeks on Wednesdays: the remaining 2024 dates are; **6 March, 3 April, 1 May, 29 May, 25 June, 24 July, 20 August, 17 September, 15 October, 12 November, 10 December**

Large print, Audio & Childrens' books, also CDs and DVDs are available for a small charge. Contact Pete Wells or Helen Hudson on [help@suffolklibraries.co.uk](mailto:help@suffolklibraries.co.uk), visit the website <http://suffolkreads.onesuffolk.net/libraries-and-mobiles/> or phone **01473 584563**

**To put something in the Village Noticeboard**, please ring Graham Bowles 01728 688192

**To put something in the Newsletter** email to [shane@blaxhall.com](mailto:shane@blaxhall.com) tel. 01728 885215

**Allotment information** contact Sophie Martin on 07724 356916, [Blaxhall.Allotments@gmail.com](mailto:Blaxhall.Allotments@gmail.com)

**Tree Warden** - Joy Shaw, [joyjoyshaw@gmail.com](mailto:joyjoyshaw@gmail.com), 01728 688309

Previous newsletters can be found online at [issuu.com/blaxhall](http://issuu.com/blaxhall)

**Newsletter Contact** [shane@blaxhall.com](mailto:shane@blaxhall.com)

**Deadline for next Newsletter - 10<sup>th</sup> May**